

Message Text

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ACTION AF-04

INFO OCT-01 SS-14 ISO-00 NSC-05 NSCE-00 SAM-01 EUR-06 PM-01

SP-02 L-01 PRS-01 INR-05 CIAE-00 DODE-00 ACDA-10 IO-03

SSO-00 INRE-00 /054 W

----- 117692

O R 180730Z JUL 75

FM AMCONSUL LUANDA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 3813

INFO AMEMBASSY LISBON

AMEMBASSY KINSHASA

AMEMBASSY LUSAKA

AMEMBASSY PRETORIA

CINCLANT NORFOLK VA

CINCEUR VAIHINGEN GER

S E C R E T LUANDA 0928

LIMDIS

NOFORN

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINS PINT MILI AO

SUBJECT: HIGH COMMISSIONER REVIEWS THE CURRENT SITUATION

CINCLANT AND CINCEUR FOR POLADS

1. I TALKED ON JULY 17 WITH HIGH COMMISSIONER GENERAL ANTONIO DA SILVA CARDOSO ABOUT THE SITUATION IN LUANDA AND THE OUTLOOK FOR THE IMMEDIATE FUTURE. AS I WAS PARKING MY CAR AMID SEVERAL HUNDRED REFUGEES, GARBAGE AND CHARCOAL FIRES IN FRONT OF THE PALACE, FNLA MINISTER OF HEALTH ABRIGADA HAILED ME FROM HIS WHITE MERCEDES TO SAY HE WANTED TO TALK TO ME RIGHT AWAY. WE ARE GOING TO GET TOGETHER ON JULY 18 AND I WILL REPORT WHAT HE HAS TO SAY.

2. I FOUND THE COMMANDER OF THE PORTUGUESE ARMY IN ANGOLA, GENERAL ERNESTO MACEDO, SITTING BEHIND THE DESK OF THE HIGH COMMISSIONER'S

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SECRETARY. I TOLD HIM OF HIS PLOT TO OVERTHROW THE HIGH COMMISS-

IONER AND TURN ANGOLA OVER TO THE MPLA. HE WAS DELIGHTED TO HEAR OF IT AND WANTED TO KNOW THE DETAILS. I SAID THAT AS HIS SON IS A LEFTIST MEMBER OF THE REVOLUTIONARY COUNCIL IN PORTUGAL, HE HIMSELF FAVORS THE MPLA AND IS DETERMINED TO HAND THE COUNTRY OVER TO AGOSTINHO NETO. MECEDO WENT IN TO TELL CARDOSO THE NEWS. BOTH MEN HAD HEARD THAT MACEDO WAS IN LEAGUE WITH THE MPLA, BUT THEY DID NOW KNOW OF THE CONSPIRACY AGAINST THE HIGH COMMISSIONER. I TOLD THEM THE STORY HAD BEEN CIRCULATING FOR OVER A WEEK. MACEDO SAID THAT HIS SON DOES, IN FACT, SUPPORT PRIME MINISTER VASCO GONCALVES. BEFORE HE WITHDREW, MACEDO SAID THAT DURING THE FIGHTING IN LUANDA, MPLA USED THE PRESENCE OF PORTUGUESE TROOPS TO GOOD EFFECT. FOR EXAMPLE, WHEN A PORTUGUESE ARMORED CAR WOULD DRIVE UP TO INTERPOSE ITSELF BETWEEN THE OPPOSING FORCES, MPLA TROOPS WOULD IMMEDIATELY DASH FORWARD TO FIRE AT THE BEFUDDLED FNLA FROM THE COVER PROVIDED BY THE VEHICLE.

3. CARDOSO SAID THAT FOREIGN MINISTER MELO ANTUNES ACCOMPLISHED VERY LITTLE DURING HIS TWO DAYS IN LUANDA. HE TALKED WITH AGOSTINHO NETO, WHO WAS UNYIELDING AND REITERATED HIS POSITION THAT FNLA TROOPS MUST BE DRIVEN OUT OF LUANDA TO END THE SAVAGERIES COMMITTED BY THEM AGAINST CIVILIANS. AFTER TALKING INDIVIDUALLY WITH REPRESENTATIVES OF THE THREE MOVEMENTS, MELO ANTUNES HAD PLANNED TO MEET WITH THEM IN CONFERENCE, BUT HE WAS CALLED BACK TO LISBON BECAUSE OF THE DEVELOPING CRISIS IN PORTUGAL. CARDOSO TOLD ME THAT NETO'S POSITION ON FNLA MISTREATMENT OF CIVILIANS WAS WELL FOUNDED.

4. THE HIGH COMMISSIONER SAID THAT FNLA AND MPLA LEADERS HAVE BEEN TALKING AT THE SAN MIGUEL FORTRESS SINCE JULY 15. MINISTER OF THE INTERIOR NGOLA KABANGU REPRESENTED THE FNLA, AND LUCIO LARA AND IKO CARRERA NEGOTIATED FOR MPLA, ASSISTED AT TIME BY MILITARY COMMANDER CHIETO. COMMANDER BARREIROS, FNLA'S TOP MILITARY MAN IN LUANDA, ALSO PARTICIPATED, SAID CARDOSO, BUT HE IS A USELESS APPENDAGE. HE ASKED THE COMMISSIONER FOR A FIGHTER PLANE. FNLA, HE SAID, HAS A PILOT, AND WITH ONE PLANE HE COULD ELIMINATE THE MPLA.

5. ACCORDING TO CARDOSO, THE TALKS CENTER AROUND THE REMOVAL FROM LUANDA OF MILITARY FORCES IN EXCESS OF THOSE PROVIDED FOR IN HE VARIOUS AGREEMENTS SIGNED BY THE LIBERATION MOVEMENTS. FNLA HAS

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SAID IT IS WILLING TO COMPLY, BUT ONLY IF MPLA WITHDRAWS ITS EXCESS TROOPS AT THE SAME TIME. MPLA, FOR ITS PART, HAS SAID THAT AS THE VICTOR IN THIS LATEST ROUND IT SHOULD HAVE CERTAIN PREROGATIVES AND WILL REMOVE ITS EXCESS FORCES ONLY AFTER FNLA HAS FULFILLED ITS END OF THE BARGAIN. THERE THE MATTER STOOD ON JULY 17 AND THE HIGH COMMISSIONER WENT IMMEDIATELY FROM OUR CONVERSATION TO CHAIR A MEETING OF THE NATIONAL DEFENSE COMMISSION THAT WAS TO TRY AND RESOLVE THE IMPASSE. HE SAID THAT IF A SOLUTION COULD NOT BE

FOUND FNLA MIGHT WITHDRAW FROM THE GOVERNMENT.

6. I ASKED THE GENERAL HOW MANY PORTUGUESE TROOPS HAD BEEN FLOWN IN FROM THE METROPOLIS; WE HAVE HEARD THAT ANYWHERE FROM TWO TO SEVEN COMPANIES HAD ARRIVED. HE SAID THAT THREE COMPANIES HAVE ARRIVED - ONE OF COMMANDOS, ONE OF MARINES AND ONE OF PARATROOPERS - AND THAT ANOTHER SIX COMPANIES ARE ON ALERT AND CAN BE HERE IN FORTY-EIGHT HOURS IF HE REQUESTS THEM. ALL PORTUGUESE TROOPS AT THE PRESENT TIME ARE DEPLOYED THROUGHOUT THE CITY TO MAINTAIN ORDER AND, WHEREEVER POSSIBLE, TO PREVENT THE ENTRY INTO THE CITY OF ADDITIONAL LIBERATION FORCES. PORTUGUESE INTELLIGENCE HAS TOLD HIM THAT FNLA IS ON THE MARCH FROM THE NORTH AND HE HAS DIRECTED HIS FORCES TO RECONNOITER THE AREA NORTH OF LUANDA AND PREPARE A PERIMETER DEFENSE OF THE CITY IN THE EVENT FNLA BREAKS THROUGH MPLA LINES AROUND CAXITO. HE HAS ORDERED THAT NO FORCES BE DEPLOYED FOR THE MOMENT, BUT THAT ALL ELEMENTS SHOULD BE ALERTED. HE SAID THAT IF FNLA GETS TO LUANDA A SLAUGHTER OF CIVILIANS WILL ENSUE AND THAT PORTUGUESE TROOPS DEFINITELY WILL GO ON THE OFFENSIVE TO PREVENT SUCH AN EVENTUALITY. HE IS CONFIDENT THE TROOPS WILL FIGHT.

7. ONE OF CARDOSO'S MAJOR CONCERNS IS TO GET THE FNLA OUT OF LUANDA BEFORE FNLA HITS THE MPLA AT CAXITO. IF THE FNLA WITHDRAWS FROM THE CITY, MPLA CAN FREE ITS TROOPS IN THE CITY TO GO NORTHWARD AND ASSIST IN THE DEFENSE. IF FNLA REMAINS IN THE CITY, MPLA WILL BE TIED DOWN HERE AND HAVE TO FIGHT ON TWO FRONTS. DESPITE THE DEFEAT IT SUFFERED HERE, CARDOSO SAID, FNLA STILL HAS A SIZEABLE NUMBER OF TROOPS IN AND AROUND THE CITY. INTERESTINGLY ENOUGH, THE 600 FNLA TROOPS IN THE INTEGRATED FORCES REMAINED IN THEIR BARRACKS AT GRAFONIL ON THE CATETE ROAD ALL THROUGH THE LATEST FIGHTING. THE INTEGRATED FORCES OF MPLA ALSO STAYED IN THEIR BARRACKS. CARDOSO BELIEVES THAT LARGE NUMBERS OF FNLA SOLDIERS REMAIN IN HIDING IN THE CITY WITH THEIR WEAPONS AND CONSTITUTE A POTENTIALLY DANGEROUS FORCE IF COMBINED WITH THOSE REMAINING

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IN THE SAN PEDRO DA BARRA FORTRESS NORTH OF THE CITY AND OTHER, SCATTERED HOLDOUTS IN THE INDUSTRIAL SECTOR TO THE NORTH. HE HAS ALMOST NO HOPE HE CAN INDUCE THE FNLA TO LEAVE THE CITY BEFORE HOSTILITIES COMMENCE AT CAXITO.

8. CARDOSO THOUGHT THAT AS A MATTER OF OVERALL STRATEGY SOMEONE OUGHT TO SUPPLY ARMS AND EQUIPMENT TO FNLA TO ALLOW IT TO PUT UP A BETTER FIGHT AT CAXITO, THEREBY WEAKENING THE MPLA. HOWEVER HE COULD NOT HAVE IT BOTH WAYS; IF HE IS AFRAID THE FNLA MIGHT BREAK THROUGH IF THE MPLA IS ENGAGED ON TWO FRONTS, IT DOES NOT MAKE MUCH SENSE TO RESUPPLY THE FNLA AT CAXITO. WHAT HE HAS REDUCED IS SUSPECT,

AND WHICH OTHER PORTUGUESE MILITARY SOURCES BELIEVE, IS THAT IF FNLA AND MPLA WASTE THEMSELVES IN PITCHED BATTLES UNITA AND JONAS SAVIMBI, WILL BY THAT FACT ALONE BE STRENGTHENED AND ABLE TO

PLAY A STRONGER ROLE ON THE NATIONAL SCENE.

9. BEFORE LEAVING FOR HIS DEFENSE COMMISSION MEETING, THE HIGH COMMISSIONER SAID THAT IF FNLA DOES ATTACK AND BREAK THROUGH MPLA LINES, WHICH HE DOUBTED IT COULD DO, AND GOT THROUGH THE PORTUGUESE DEFENSE PERIMETER, WHICH SEEMED UNLIKELY, THERE WOULD BE A BLOODBATH IN LUANDA AND THE UNITED NATIONS WOULD HAVE TO BE CALLED IN.

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: Z
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: REFUGEES, GOVERNMENT OVERTHROW, LIBERATION FRONTS, PLOTS, POLITICAL SITUATION
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 18 JUL 1975
Decaption Date: 28 MAY 2004
Decaption Note: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: GolinoFR
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1975LUANDA00928
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D750249-0228
From: LUANDA
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1975/newtext/t19750743/aaaabmfm.tel
Line Count: 178
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION AF
Original Classification: SECRET
Original Handling Restrictions: LIMDIS
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 4
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: SECRET
Previous Handling Restrictions: LIMDIS
Reference: n/a
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: GolinoFR
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 11 JUN 2003
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <11 JUN 2003 by ifshinsr>; APPROVED <12 JUN 2003 by GolinoFR>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
06 JUL 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: HIGH COMMISSIONER REVIEWS THE CURRENT SITUATION CINCLANT AND CINCEUR FOR POLADS
TAGS: PINS, PINT, MILI, AO, MPLA, FNLA, UNITA, (CARDOSO, ANTONIO DA SILVA)
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 06 JUL 2006